

## **Romans (73)** **The Other Spiritual Gifts**

Our Lord teaches us in Romans 12 that we who believe on the Lord Jesus are to be transformed, and that we experience this transformation through the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1, 2). When we become Christians, we need to change our understanding of many things, in fact, depending on how far from the Lord we were when He saved us, we may need to change almost everything we formerly assumed to be true and believed. The first step in the order of change is for us to be humble before the Lord and before others. Verse 3 reads, “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment...” The very nature of biblical Christianity brings very low our estimation of ourselves. Here was Paul’s new opinion of himself after having lived a life of what he thought had been a godly and holy man.

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

<sup>2</sup>Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! <sup>3</sup>For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: <sup>5</sup>circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup>But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup>Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; <sup>10</sup>that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, <sup>11</sup>if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Phil. 3:1-11)

Paul had thought he was quite the man before hearing and seeing Jesus Christ and seeing his need for Jesus Christ alone as his Lord and Savior. But then he came to see that all of those things in his life prior to that event had blinded him from his true need and his true source of eternal happiness. He came to see his present privilege and calling in the Christian ministry was wholly of grace. He wrote,

<sup>12</sup>And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, <sup>13</sup>although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. <sup>14</sup>And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup>This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. (1 Tim. 1:12-15)

Paul was speaking from personal experience when he wrote, “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment.”

The Lord then teaches us in Romans 12:4 and 5 that every Christian is to view himself/herself as a member of the body of Christ, the local church. He is to see himself as having been gifted by God for this task. Each of us that are in Christ has been given a “measure of faith that God has assigned.” This giftedness enables each of us to be necessary and beneficial to the church of which we are members.

The apostle then listed seven gifts.<sup>1</sup> We read of them in verses 6 through 8.

<sup>6</sup>Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup>if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup>the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Last Lord's Day we addressed the *first gift* listed, which is the gift of *prophecy*. We saw how this was a gift of the apostolic age through which the Lord established His church. Let us now consider the other six gifts listed by the apostle.

We read the second gift listed in **verse 7**, which is the gift of *service*. Paul wrote, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: ... *if service, in our serving...*" In whatever way the Lord has gifted us, we are to serve our brothers and sisters in the church using that gift. This should probably be understood as instructing Christians to render practical service to one another. Service speaks of helping others with whatever it is that will bring benefit to them. It may be to provide some practical need or perhaps to serve another in some spiritual need. The Greek word for "service" is the same word we use for a deacon.<sup>2</sup> It would be natural to see this to be a special giftedness to be employed in the diaconate (and their wives, as they are to serve as a team). But this gift need not be restricted to deacons, of course.

Actually, the Greek word for "service" was also used to describe the ministry, even the ministry of the Word. We read in Acts 6:1ff:

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup>And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. <sup>3</sup>Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup>But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to *the ministry* of the word."

Here the word "ministry" is the same word that is translated "serving" in Romans 12:7.

We also read in Acts 20 the same idea. Here Paul described his commitment to his "service" or ministry of the Word:

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup>except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. <sup>24</sup>But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and *the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.* (Acts 20:22-24)

Here again, the word translated "ministry" is the same word translated "service" in Romans 12:7. Here his "service" was "to testify of the gospel of the grace of God."

The same idea is in **Acts 21:17-19**.

<sup>17</sup>When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. <sup>18</sup>On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup>After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles *through his ministry*. <sup>20</sup>And when they heard it, they glorified God.

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<sup>1</sup> In this context nothing is suggested or even implied in the number "seven" as numbers do have significance in apocalyptic sections of the Bible (e.g. Revelation, Daniel, Isaiah 24-27, Zechariah 9-14, Mark 13, Matthew 24, and others.

<sup>2</sup> εἴτε διακονίαν ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ ; literally, "if deaconing, in the diaconate."

In the epistle to the Romans Paul used the word in this same way. Romans 11:13, “Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my *ministry*.” Here he said that he magnified his “service” (διακονία).

Here are some other instances of the word translated “service” in Romans 12:7 in which it is used of the ministry (service) of the Word.

**2 Corinthians 4:1-2.** “Therefore, having *this ministry* by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup>But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.”

**2 Corinthians 5:17-19.** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us *the ministry* of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”

**1 Timothy 1:12-14.** “I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to His *service* (KJV “ministry”), <sup>13</sup>though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, <sup>14</sup>and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”

**2 Timothy 4:1-5.** “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup>*preach the word*; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup>For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. <sup>5</sup>As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your *ministry* (διακονία).”

All of these instances in which the word translated “service” in Romans 12:7 is used elsewhere by Paul to refer to the ministry of the word, has led some to say that is what Paul was intending to set forth in Romans 12:7.<sup>3</sup> In other words, Paul was speaking of the one(s) in the church with the gift of the ministry of the Word, i.e. the proclamation of the Word. The one so gifted should focus on the ministry of the Word.

There is another reason why this may be the best way to understand this “service” to be the ministry of the word. Consider the order and nature of the other gifts in this list. If it is to be understood as the ministry of the word, then the listed gifts are as follows:

- “if *prophecy*”, which is the proclamation of the prophetic word given by the Holy Spirit;
- “if *service/ministry*”, which is the preaching of the Word of God enabled by the Holy Spirit;
- “the one who *teaches*”, which is teaching the Word of God.
- “the one who *exhorts*”, which is encouraging others with the Word of God.
- “the one who *contributes*, in generosity;
- “the one who *leads*, with zeal;
- “the one who *does acts of mercy*, with cheerfulness.

However, this is speculative at best. **John Murray** put the matter well:

As far as usage is concerned, there is, therefore, abundant support for the view that the ministry of the Word is intended. In addition, this office follows prophecy and precedes that of teaching in the apostle's enumeration. If an order of priority occurs here, then we would be compelled to regard the

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<sup>3</sup> See John Murray, *Romans* (Eerdmans, 1965), vol. 2, p.

ministry as that of the Word, because no other phase of the church's ministration could have a higher place than that of teaching except the general ministry of the Word. On this assumption the first four functions would obviously be in the order of rank—prophecy, ministry of the Word, teaching, exhortation. However, reasonable is this view we cannot be certain that this was the function in mind.

1) The term is also used in the more restricted sense of the ministry of mercy with reference to physical need (cf. Acts 6:1; 11:29; 2:25; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 12, 13). Furthermore, in this epistle (15:31) the term is used in this sense of Paul's own mission to Jerusalem, as is apparent from 15:25-27...

2) It is not clear in this passage the gifts enumerated are in order of rank (cf. 1 Cor. 12:8-10). If the order of priority is not adhered to, there is no reason why the ministry of mercy should not be mentioned at this point.

3) Although this term is not used to denote the diaconate, yet the corresponding term "servant" is used in the sense of "deacon" and he verb in the sense of exercising the office of a deacon (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 10, 12, 13).

4) If the ministry of the Word is intended, it would be difficult to maintain the distinction of gift and function which in this context must be supposed. If ministry is understood in the broader sense the function would apply to the prophet, on the one hand, and to the teacher on the other. Hence it would lack the distinguishing specificity which we would expect.<sup>4</sup>

We read the *third gift* listed is that of *teaching*--"*the one who teaches, in his teaching.*" Whereas the prophet had received direct revelation from God, the teacher instructs in what God has already revealed, and that principally through Scripture. The one with the gift of teaching should be busy teaching, just as someone who has the ability to serve, should be serving others.

The gift of teaching implies that there is doctrine to be taught and instruction in living to be given to the church of Jesus Christ. What was to be taught? First, of course the Holy Scriptures are to be taught, which was chiefly the Old Testament when Paul wrote this epistle. But also the "apostles' doctrine" needed to be taught to the people. We read of the new Christians who had been converted to faith in Jesus Christ on the day of Pentecost:

<sup>41</sup>Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. <sup>42</sup>And they continued steadfastly in *the apostles' doctrine* and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:41f)

There are some matters that we are told in the New Testament need to be taught to our people. We read in Hebrews 5:12, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, *you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God.* You need milk, not solid food." There are some who need to teach the basics of the faith to new Christians. But there are other more practical matters that need to be taught. Consider these verses:

**1 Timothy 6:2.** "Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. *Teach and urge these things.*"

**1 Timothy 4:1-11.** "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, <sup>2</sup>through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, <sup>3</sup>who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. <sup>4</sup>For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, <sup>5</sup>for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. <sup>6</sup>*If you put these things before the brothers*, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. <sup>7</sup>Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; <sup>8</sup>for while bodily training is of some

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<sup>4</sup> Murray, *Romans*, pp. 123f.

value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. <sup>9</sup> he saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. <sup>10</sup>For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. <sup>11</sup>*Command and teach these things.*”

Paul taught his churches about his own experiences and lessons that he could illustrate to them.

<sup>16</sup>I urge you, then, be imitators of me. <sup>17</sup>That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to *remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.* (1 Cor. 4:16)

When Paul gave a charge to Titus to minister on the island of Crete, he told him of the form and nature of teaching that would be necessary in the church.

But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. <sup>2</sup>Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. <sup>3</sup>Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, <sup>4</sup>and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, <sup>5</sup>to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. <sup>6</sup>Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. <sup>7</sup>Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, <sup>8</sup>and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. (Titus 2:1-8)

It is a sad thing when Christians within a church go out to those of the world to be taught how and what to think regarding dealing with problems and issues in relationships and in other practical matters. The Lord has placed gifted people within his church sufficient to care for and lead his people. And to some the Lord has given a special spiritual gift of teaching to serve the body of Christ.

We read the *fourth gift* listed is that of *exhortation*--“*the one who exhorts, in his exhortation.*” Some people are gifted encouragers of other people. Their presence and their words just seem to influence others for good. They inspire action and promote righteousness in people. They encourage the downcast and warn the indifferent and the careless. Apparently Barnabus had this spiritual gift. They seem to have an unusual ability to influence and affect people for good and godly ends.

Some would see the third gift of “teaching” to be the plain instruction of biblical truth without application, but the gift of exhortation is the ability to apply the word to life. **Matthew Henry** thought that this was so: “Teaching is the bare explaining and proving of gospel truths, without practical application, as in the expounding of Scripture.”<sup>5</sup> But the one with the gift of exhortation is the one who applies the Scripture to living. Both gifts are needed within the church. Matthew Henry sees the gift of exhortation to be that of the pastor, who applies teaching to living.

Let him that exhorteth, wait on exhortation. Let him give himself to that. This is the work of the pastor, as the former of the teacher; to apply gospel truths and rules more closely to the case and condition of the people, and to press upon them that which is more practical. Many that are very accurate in teaching may yet be very cold and unskillful in exhorting; and on the contrary, the one requires a clearer head, the other is a warmer heart. Now where these gifts are evidently separated (that one excels in the one and the other in the other) it conduces to edification to divide the work accordingly; and, whatsoever the work is that we undertake, let us mind it. To wait on our work is to let us mind it. To wait on our work is to bestow the best of our time and thoughts upon it, to lay hold on all opportunities for it, and to study not only to do it, but to do it well.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Fleming H. Revell), vol. 6, p. 460f.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

The *fifth gift* is that of *giving financially*--“*the one who contributes (gives financially), in generosity.*” Although all are to give, some have the spiritual gift of giving. I have known a few of these gifted people over the years. They delight in relieving needs and they greatly delight in seeing their stewardship advance the cause of the gospel. The gift of giving need not necessarily be seen in the amount that one gives. Let us remember the poor widow of Luke 21.

And He (Jesus) looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, <sup>2</sup> and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. <sup>3</sup>So He said, “Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; <sup>4</sup>for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.” (Luke 21:1ff)

Someone recently sent me a card and it contained a \$5. Knowing its source, I commented to Mary, “It looks like the two mites to me.”

The *sixth spiritual gift* listed is the one who is gifted in *leadership* in the church-- “*the one who leads, with zeal.*” The Lord gives some of His people the ability to lead others. Paul tells those who have the gift of leadership to lead with zeal. Perhaps Paul gave this instruction to lead with zeal suggests that leadership sometimes may tend toward laziness. Or, perhaps one gifted with leadership will hesitate to step forward. Most men will let others lead unless they are pressed to assume responsibility. They then rise to the challenge.

Again, we are to lead with zeal. Years ago I heard J. Vernon McGee teach that the great dangers of the ministry is laziness and greed. I will take his word for that. We are to lead by doing and that with enthusiasm. The leader is one who has the ability to see ahead; he knows where the church needs to move forward. He sees the obstacles or obstructions ahead of time, and moves to remove them in a timely manner.

The *seventh* and last *spiritual gift* listed is the one who is gifted to perform acts of *mercy* in the church--“*the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*” The one who has the gift of mercy seems to see and feel the hurt of others keenly. I suppose one with this kind of gift could become rather morose, so Paul exhorted the ones who do acts of mercy purpose to do so with cheerfulness. People not only need sympathy in their suffering, needing to be “bound up”, but they need to be cheered up as well.

Of course each of us are to be doing all of these things when the occasion presents itself to us. (1) Are we all to *prophecy*? Paul wrote, “Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophecy” (1 Cor. 14:1). This should not be understood by us in the sense of giving forth prophecies from the Lord, knowing ahead of time events that could not normally be foreseen, but rather, we should all tell forth the Word of God to others. (2) Should we all be *servicing*? “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love *serve one another*” (Gal. 5:13). (3) Are we all to be *teaching* others? The writer rebuked the Christians to whom he was writing: “*For though by this time you ought to be teachers*, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food” (Heb 5:12). When we learn of the Lord we are given a trust to pass that along to others. (4) Are we all to be *exhorting* others? Hebrews 10:12f, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but *exhort one another daily*, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” (5) What of *giving* of our finances to others and to the work of the Lord? Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: “On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come” (1 Cor. 16:2). (6) And what of *leading*? Of course not everyone can be a leader of others, unless you consider that living as an example to before others is a manner of “leading”. What Paul wrote of timothy could be extended to all others at one point or another: “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12). May the Lord help each of us lead others by our example in what they are to believe and how they are to live. And last, (7) are we all to do *acts of mercy*? Of course we

are to do so. Our Lord taught His disciples, “Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:36). But though each of us is to manifest the nature of each of these gifts in our dealings with one another, the Lord gives special grace for each Christian to do one of these things especially well and the church is thereby built up.

After Paul set before his readers the need for them each to serve God and God’s people through their spiritual gifts, he gives a series of practical commands that touch on how we as Christians are to relate to others. **Verses 9-21** read:

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup>Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

<sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. <sup>17</sup>Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” <sup>20</sup>To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

We will address these next Lord’s Day, Lord willing.